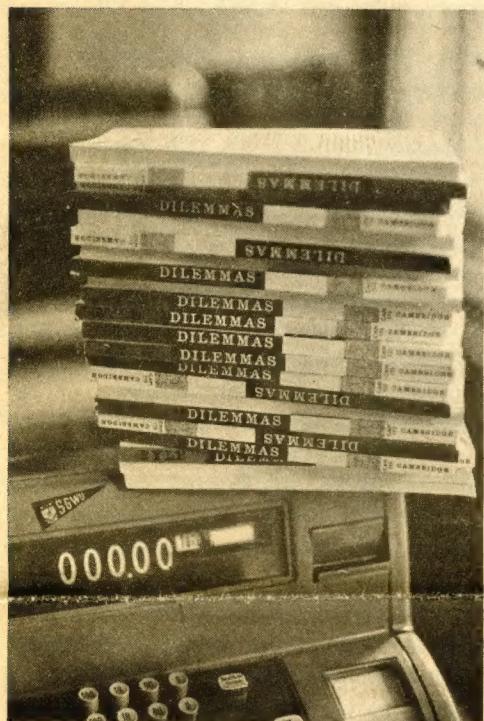


Bookstore.. where do we go from here?

'We want Silver fired now!' —S.A.



The S.A. is insisting that Mr. Silver be fired because it feels he is chiefly responsible for the mess the Bookstore finds itself in. It claims he runs the Bookstore as if it were a small town general store and that he is generally a poor administrator. It claims as proof an \$89,000 deficit incurred last year.

"We don't want or need a bookstore which carries such items as mugs, personality posters, sweatshirts, cufflinks, nightshirts and hosiery. The Bookstore is supposed to be a service to both faculty and student and as such it should deal mainly in books . . . all kinds of books not just those which are required reading," stated Bill Schwartz, president of the S.A.

After the May meeting of the Bookstore committee, Manny Kalles (then the S.A. president) wrote a letter to chairman John Jackson informing him that he could no longer see any value in continued S.A. participation. Bill Schwartz states his case quite simply: "We refuse to waste time, in this case 22 months, on a committee of faculty and students which makes good recommendations only to have them rejected by Silver and Worrell."

"We would like the administration to explain why Silver earns more than at least 75% of our faculty. That's shocking especially in view of the fact that we've been told by people in the administration that the man is incapable and overpaid. And when we press them for some sort of action, we're told it's a human problem and these things take time," said Alan Zweig, vice-president (student affairs).

The S.A. book sale had been under consideration for some time but was realized only this year under the direction of Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Zweig. Books for cer-

tain courses were ordered directly from the publisher in quantities not exceeding 15% of day enrolment.

Mr. Schwartz has said that the S.A. book sale cannot possibly show how Silver has failed because of the difference in size of the two operations. The book sale is intended as a service to students and a declaration of S.A. dissatisfaction with the running of the University Bookstore. Mr. Zweig says the success of the sale is assured because of the sympathetic reaction from both faculty and students.

The S.A. has encountered "unusual resistance" from publishers to ship books. Schwartz claims it is not a matter of credit and that certain as yet unidentified people in the Administration have been instructing publishers not to ship. The S.A. has requested an investigation by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

The S.A. is now firmly entrenched in its position. They maintain a University Bookstore is a service to students and faculty and should not be run otherwise. And they want more books and magazines and less accessories. They are adamant in their refusal to take part in any Bookstore committees until Jack Silver is dismissed.

But perhaps most important of all, they will not present their case in the violent and militant manner of many of their contemporaries. They are, however, prepared to fight in the legal setting of the courtroom for what they think is just. •

The Issue

Two years ago the operation of the University Bookstore crystallized student unrest at Sir George. Today the affairs of the Bookstore are again the focal point of concern.

The Students Association has withdrawn its representation from the tripartite Book-store committee claiming the body is impotent and is maintained by the Administration only as an illustration of student participation in University affairs. The S.A. has undertaken a book sale for a limited number of courses with a 15% discount on most titles.

This week the Bookstore committee is considering the reports of two consultants which it commissioned. It will then make recommendations to John Smola, vice-principal (administration and finance).

E.S.A. wants clearly defined committee

The Evening Students Association is convinced that the Bookstore committee can be a meaningful body once its mandate is clearly defined. Wayne Gray, one of two E.S.A. representatives on the Bookstore committee, sees three options or roles open to the committee. The committee can only begin its important work when it has defined itself as a management, a policy-making or an advisory body. Up to now, the committee has not done this and has failed to reduce prices and improve service. Along with this, the committee has concerned itself far too much with trivial matters.

"Even though the S.A. has now pulled out, I feel the committee is still operable. Their action was unilateral and arbitrary and I think that the committee should go on with its business. I would advise the committee to go on and become an advisory and research body completely removed from the management side," explained Mr. Gray.

The S.A. book sale has been condemned as an example of "very poor business practices" in action. The sale will not stock all courses nor will it try to supply every student with all his book needs. Mr. Gray feels that the S.A. have manipulated existing conditions unfairly for their own purposes. They don't

have to pay rent or labor on the one hand, while they're using office space paid for by students in student services fees. Mr. Gray maintain that the S.A. is using university space to run the University Bookstore into further deficit.

The E.S.A. contends that the Bookstore must be managed by people sensitive to the market and capable of adjusting to the market. But the fate of the Bookstore should be left in the hands of a revitalized committee. As far as the E.S.A. is concerned, the committee is faced with important decisions in the weeks ahead. The reports of the two consultants must be discussed and recommendations must be submitted to John Smola.

Mr. Gray has said that the whole question of bookstore service and how it is to be provided must be resolved. Some of the alternatives open to the University are to re-align ownership or ask a private concern to take over the operation.

Whatever the course of action, the E.S.A. would like to see the Bookstore committee continue operating in a serious and responsible fashion. The withdrawal of the S.A. should not be allowed to impede its progress and the E.S.A. does not intend to abdicate its responsibility.

Search Committee for V-P

A Search Committee for a Vice-Principal, Academic is about to be set up and should begin to hold meetings early in October - after the Faculty Councils and the Students Associations have made their appointments. In the meantime, nominations for the position may be sent to Principal J.W. O'Brien who will turn them over to the Committee when it meets. Persons from either inside or outside the University may be nominated; in the case of nominees from outside, present addresses and some biographical information should be included.

Can the Bookstore ever be more

The operating costs of the bookstore at SGWU amount to 24-25 per cent of its sales, well in line with the average for other university bookstores. But textbook discounts allow the store only a 20 per cent markup from the wholesale to the retail selling price and, with the retailer paying the freight and custom charges, this is in effect reduced to about 17 per cent. Markups on paperbacks and the assorted goods the bookstore sells are, of course, higher, ranging up to 30 and 35 per cent, but textbooks account for well over half the store's business. Jack Silver, manager of the SGWU bookstore, here faces his basic problem. He has other problems, of course, but generally they relate to or complicate this one. Textbook publishing is a profitable business, writers of textbooks can do very nicely out of them, but most retailers prefer to carry art books.

Why does a university operate a bookstore? However efficiently it is run, the profit will be at best slender. There was a story current a few years ago about the SGWU store netting \$90,000, but this was a fallacious figure produced before the University accounts had been liberated from the YMCA; many operating costs were not covered. In fact, in 1967-68 the bookstore operated at a serious loss, partly accounted for by inventory write-off and reduced but not eliminated in the last academic year. A university bookstore is a service operation; it stands or falls by the quality of its services. And their core is the provision of textbooks on time and at a reasonable price.

How does the SGWU operation measure up? A visit to the temporary sales centre in Birks Hall in recent weeks will have pointed up the size of the requirement. But behind that solid massing of many texts - and the frustrating absence of others - is a complicated activity which depends above all on extensive cooperation between the store management and the faculty.

Faculty co-operation is vital

The management has to know what courses are to

be given, what books will be required, and how many students are likely to buy them. Margaret MacMurray sends out estimate forms to the academic departments in January, requesting that they be completed by March 31. (There is an earlier return date for summer courses.) Reminder letters follow a couple of weeks later. This year the replies arrived from the departments according to the following monthly breakdown: February 13; March 42; April 44; May 99; June 123; July 112; August 94. To put it mildly, such a rate of response makes it exceedingly tough for the bookstore to accumulate enough copies of needed books by early September.

It isn't so bad if publishers have the works in stock and must merely package and ship them. Books in Toronto reach here in about 10 days; those ordered from U.S. publishers within a month. But if a book is out of print, it can easily take three months before the copies arrive. And many of the titles which the faculty order are out of print. For instance, Margaret MacMurray recalls that on a single day recently she had to notify ten professors that books on their lists were no longer available. Another problem can be identifying the publisher. Sometimes a Canadian publisher has sole rights in Canada, sometimes it's an American or British publisher, and the faculty member may possess or have seen a different edition from the one normally sold here.

Identifying publishers, coordinating lists, getting out orders—these jobs take time, and can hardly be completed in the last few weeks of summer. Henry Worrell has said: "If we got the orders in on time we'd remove most of the complaints about the bookstore." Jack Silver gets hot under the collar about students being assured that the books they need are in stock when the professor concerned only sent in his estimate the day before.

How many books should be ordered? The present practice is to order enough copies for all forecast students when a book is used for the first time. This may appear excessive, particularly for some of the Humanities and Social Sciences, but Silver

says he is meeting a faculty requirement. However, while in subjects like mathematics, chemistry and accounting, there are few left over, returns can be heavy in other areas. In subsequent years, the sales record of each book is studied to determine how many copies are likely to be needed.

But these plans, even if they worked properly, would not be infallible. Sections are added, courses are cancelled, and changes in book titles made up to the last moment.

Returns, too, can present a problem. Many publishers take back all the books returned to them, giving a full 100 per cent on the price, providing the condition is satisfactory. But others are stickier, and allow only 10 per cent returns. There is no common policy. And if a text is changed after only a year, or a new edition is used - and textbook publishers are demons for bringing out new editions - the bookstore can well face a serious loss.

Experts pinpoint weaknesses

In recent months the Bookstore committee has had two outside experts make independent studies of the bookstore operations. Both have drawn attention to one salient weakness. "As long as the store is operated out of four locations and three stockrooms it is hard to conceive of its ever being anything more than a marginal operation."

To take the main store first: "The location is not bad, but the physical plant itself is almost impossible to operate as a well-merchandised store because of the many rooms and floor levels. The reserve stock in all the basement area and the third floor makes it very difficult to properly control inventory." Then there is the paperback store: "This is a very attractive store, well laid out and well merchandised, but it's on the second floor and in a poor traffic location. I doubt very much if it will ever reach more than fifty to sixty per cent of its true sales potential unless the location is moved to the street level where it can capitalize on the off street traffic." But the University does not have a

BOOKSTORE COMMITTEE DISBANDS

After a three hour meeting yesterday the Bookstore Committee arrived at a single unanimous resolution - to disband. At the same time, it decided to forward to Vice-Principal John Smola its accumulation of experts' reports, commentaries on those reports, and records of discussions.

The Committee was able to identify certain necessary areas of decision for Smola, but not to make unanimous recommendations about them. The areas are: should a bookstore continue to exist and what kind of bookstore should it be; should manager Jack Silver be retained or fired; what authority does the bookstore manager require to be able to manage effectively; to what person or body should the bookstore manager report?

Statements of position were submitted by Professor Howard Fink; Wayne Gray and Ian Dewar; and Harold Shaffer. The following extracts indicate the divergency of viewpoints:

"These are the highlights of the two reports, which help to confirm one another

in revealing that the Bookstore Management is completely inept in **every** area of administration: merchandising, stock-control, salaries, costs, training of staff, efficient use of space, and trouble-shooting."

Howard Fink

"What we have done, and now the University administration has joined in, is erode the Manager's position, undermine him and overburden his administrative structure with policy **and** management directions without giving him the tools he needs to carry them out ... The argument that is he, then, incompetent is invalid."

Wayne Gray and Ian Dewar

"Any major element of the university community besides the Day Students' Association can cease to patronize the University Bookstore. Therefore it becomes obvious that unless binding agreement can be formulated with the major elements that constitute the university community, the Bookstore should be abandoned."

Harold Shaffer



Henry Worrell
University controller
emphasizes a point
Jack Silver
Bookstore manager
listens

more than a marginal operation?

city permit to allow the sale of books to non-members and there are several good commercial bookstores within a block or two.

The High School store in the Norris Building, which also serves Commerce students, is several floors away from its stock rooms. And there are the special arrangements which must be made in September for the Birks Hall sale. In fact, about 80 per cent of the bookstore's annual business is done in the first three months of the academic year.

These peculiarities, these drawbacks, add substantially to operating costs. In fact, salary levels are if anything rather lower than the industry average, but the number of locations requires a staff out of line with sales volume. Also, a great deal of overtime must be paid. This is a direct result of the hours the stores are open, hours assumed to meet the requirements of their particular clientele. The stores are open from 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, as well as from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays during the first month of the school year. And serious consideration is being given to staying open later on at least two evenings a week.

Both studies also drew attention to another problem of management. Serious business needs to receive at least once a month a detailed profit and loss statement, so that it can trace the efficiency of its operations. So far the bookstore has not received such a statement; it has known its sales on a monthly basis, but not its expenses. But this serious deficiency is to be remedied from now on.

There has been some questioning of the main bookstore's selling of a wide range of supplies and products. Beer mugs, even crested ones, in a university bookstore window do arouse comment. Jack Silver says he stocks only items for which there is measurable demand; sales prove the need. For instance, there are a lot of girls who appreciate a convenient source of cheap nylons. And the fact remains that these products, carrying a higher mark-up, generally help to offset the losses on textbooks.

Prices not questioned

What about prices? Silver says there have been no serious complaints about prices in recent years. Canadian books are sold at the suggested retail price. Most U.S. books are sold at 10 per cent over the U.S. list, a somewhat lower figure than in regular stores, and many U.S. paperbacks are even sold at U.S. list, that is, below the price suggested for Canada.

There has clearly been need for an airing of the key facts about the bookstore, its advantages, its failings and its problems. But there is also an emotional aspect to the situation. The S.A. representatives have resigned from the Bookstore Committee stating that in 22 months of operations none of its recommendations have been carried into effect. And they have organized their own book sale this year.

Well, has the committee achieved anything? It was set up by the Joint Committee on University Affairs with faculty, student and administration members. But it does not report to the Council. In fact, one of its problems may be that it tends to operate in a vacuum, without clear lines of authority. Silver says that several recommendations have been carried out. The supplies department has been moved to the rear of the store to give better space for books. A periodicals section has been introduced. Forty titles were suggested; twenty sell, those twenty remain. A \$10,000 inventory of hard-cover supplementary reading was purchased from U.S. university presses in an endeavour to give the store a more bookish character. They cover a variety of Humanities and Social Science subjects, and sell for six to seven dollars each; so far six have been bought.

Also the store has given up slipping Time/Life student subscription forms into the books sold, even though this yielded some \$4,000 to pay for special projects, such as the two expert studies undertaken this summer.

What about the manager's office?

But Jack Silver still sits in his handsome office at the entrance to the bookstore. To quote Alan Zweig in *the georgian*: "They haven't taken up the Bookstore Committee's recommendation that Bookstore Manager Jack Silver's office be made available for selling space." Worrell and Silver say that the fact that the office contains two bearing walls makes it impossible to link up with the main sales area. And the space is too small to justify being used as it is, with a separate person in charge. The office may in fact not be too well located for the Principal to take it over. And it may not make sense to remove the paneling left over from the building's private past to create an office more in keeping with the nature of its present. And the girls on the cash desk may not be able to control possible pilfering and abuse. The irritant remains.

Clearly, the time has come for a searching study into the future of the bookstore. To what extent is it performing the services that the University community requires of it? Are all the services it endeavours to provide really necessary? How far are its weaknesses beyond the control of its management?

Where do we go from here?

And to go rather further... Should every effort be made to create as viable an operation as possible under present circumstances, or should there be a radical change in direction? Some of the possibilities that could be considered are replacement by a student cooperative, a realignment of authority under, perhaps, the Joint Council on Student Life or the handing over of operation and management to a commercial undertaking. Or replacing the present stores with a beginning-of-term operation. Clearly, a new, modern store would solve many present problems, but just as clearly financing such a move would present its own set of problems. In any case, we have here a rather sickly baby but by no means a monster. It would scarcely serve the University if the baby got thrown out with the bath water - unless it is perfectly clear that this is the only rational way to deal with it.



Alan Zweig
V-P Student Affairs
relaxes in "stockroom" with
Bill Schwartz
S.A. President



This is the hectic scene as the usually quiet Birks Hall is transformed into a bookstore for the first month of classes.

THE WEEK AT SGWU

Send notices and photos of coming events to the Information Office, Room 211 of the Norris Building, or phone 879-2867. Deadline for submission is noon Monday for the following week's events.

MONDAY 22

"CAN YOU ALL HEAR AT THE BACK?": A show on this year's registration with students, Registrar Ken Adams and Dean of Commerce Gunther Brink; channel 9 at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Monday to Wednesday; 5:45 p.m. Monday through Friday.

GALLERY II: Works of graduate student Mrs. Girnith Stewart through September 27.

GALLERY I: New paintings by Maurice Joslin.

WEDNESDAY 24

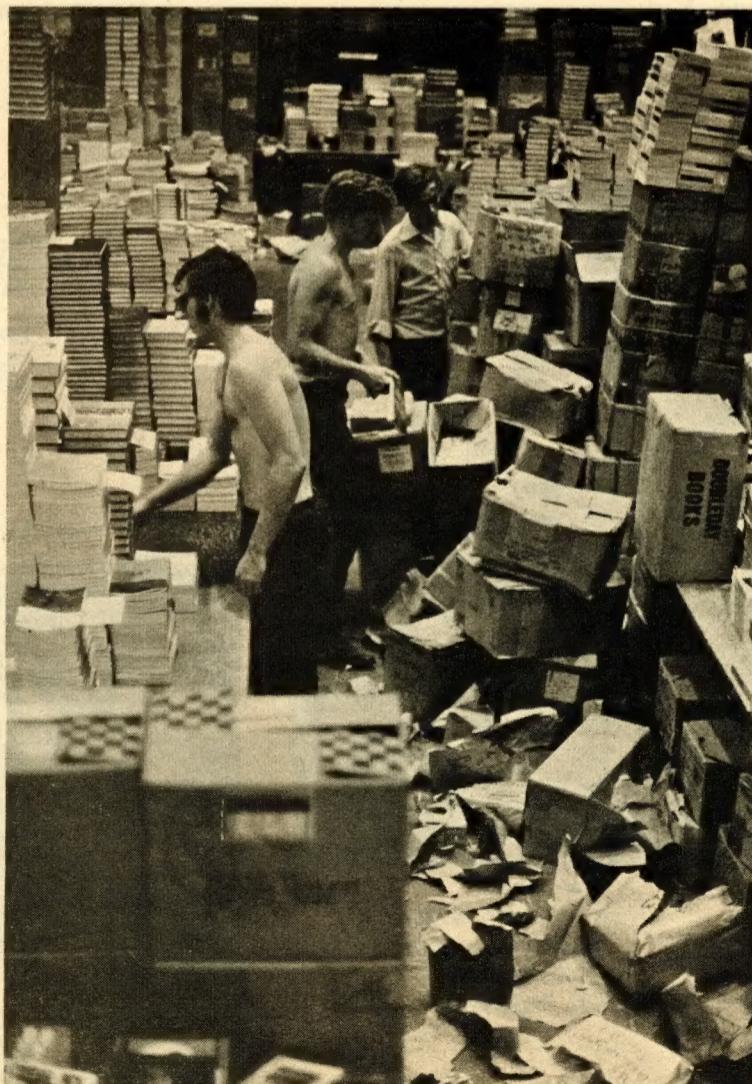
SCIENCE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION: Prof. F.W. Bedford talks on the slide rule in room H-613 at 1 p.m.

SATURDAY 27

ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH IN QUEBEC: Annual general meeting at 9 a.m., public invited; Irving Layton's speech "Growing Up Absurd in Quebec" at 10 a.m.; panel on "The Relevance of Regionalism" with Hugh Hood, Malcolm Foster, Clark Blaise and Ray Smith at 11 a.m.; continuous films from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; workshops with C.J. Newman, George Bowering, John Metcalf, John Buell, Ralph Gustafson and others at 2 pm. (see Friday)

SNOOPIES: Open house at St. Hubert airport 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; transportation every half hour from Longueuil Metro.

FIRST CANADIAN STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL: 8:30 p.m. in H-110.



Are you in favor of a student or University-run bookstore? Please send letters on this and other issues to the Information Office, room 211 of the Norris Building.

THURSDAY 25

FIRST CANADIAN STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL: H-110 at 7:30 p.m. through September 27; filmmakers Norman McLaren and Jean-Pierre Lefebvre are among the judges.

FRIDAY 26

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL: Meeting in H-769 at 2 p.m.

ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH IN QUEBEC: Meet Quebec authors -- poetry readings by Frank Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Louis Dudek, Doug Jones and Ralph Gustafson at 8 p.m.; registration fee \$4, \$2 for students (continuing tomorrow)

FIRST CANADIAN STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL: 8:30 p.m. in H-110.

SCIENCE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION: Meet the faculty beer bash-dance 8 p.m. at the La Salle Hotel; 99c or \$1.96 per couple.

SUNDAY 28

FIRST CANADIAN STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL: 8:30 p.m. in H-110.

**879-4545 - UP-TO -
THE - MINUTE NEWS OF
UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES**

879-4545 is the centralized telephone service for feeding information to the electronic bulletin of University Channel 9. From 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. TV monitors in the Hall and Norris Buildings will carry a rotating listing of events.

Faculty can now phone in information regarding departmental events, and outside events of academic interest, for daily posting. Callers should identify themselves and their department, stating what is happening, the sponsoring body, date, time and place, and charge, if any.

Students can make use of the service through SA and ESA offices.

SGWU ISSUES & EVENTS

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